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## Educating Elementary Children on Prosocial Behaviors

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Educating Elementary Children on Prosocial Behaviors

S. Stephanie Vega

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Studies

## Educating Elementary Children on Prosocial Behaviors

### **Introduction**

Many young children have not yet developed prosocial behaviors that allow them to properly express themselves. Gaining prosocial behavior skills can lead to having positive peer relationships and better communication with their classmates and/or caregivers. To address the lack of development, I created a two-day lesson for the afterschool program at Santa Ynez Valley Charter School in Santa Ynez, California. The afterschool program contains 10 students in grades K-3rd. My project will focus on kindness.

### **Need Statement**

Education on prosocial behaviors, such as kindness, are rarely part of the curriculum in elementary schools. Prosocial behaviors not only support children's school readiness and their social/emotional health, but also positive peer relationships (Flook et al., 2015). These prosocial behaviors and skills will help support children as they are used in everyday life. Without early intervention, as adults, these children could have issues with health, financial stability, and educational achievement (Flook et al., 2015). With a prosocial curriculum in place at elementary schools, children will gain beneficial skills that will lead to a positive mood and reduce stress.

Having prosocial behaviors can lead to the value of gratitude and sympathy. In a study, with 126 children between the ages of 4 to 6, it was found that children were more likely to show a helping behavior towards others if they were shown gratitude (Shoshani et al., 2020). An example of this would be one child willing to share their toys with another child who has previously shared in the past. Children are most likely to return kindness to a person who has shown gratitude towards them, as opposed to someone who hasn't. A gratitude-based approach can help children recognize and appreciate good intentions and strengthens their positive

emotions as well as their peer relationships (Shoshani et al., 2020). Carlo et al. (1991), found that if a child was feeling sad, another child was most likely to respond to emotion and give them a helping hand. An example of this would be a child offering his ball to another child who is crying because he doesn't have anything to play with. Children are most likely to react in a helpful way when they recognize sad facial cues. In other words, this study shows that children do respond to others' concerns and sympathize (Carlo et al., 1991). Acquiring prosocial behaviors are advantageous for children as it teaches children the value of gratitude; being able to reciprocate kindness towards others.

In addition, it is shown that low conflict relationships at home, for example, sibling relationships, leads to better social relationships at school (Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996). Although this is something I will not be resolving in my project, it's important to know how sibling relationships can affect peer relationships at school. A study by Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman (1996), had fifty-three children between the ages of 6-8 and their families participate in order to identify what kind of relationship they had. It was found that sibling conflict was associated with poor peer relationships and behavioral problems at school (Stormshak, Bellanti, & Bierman, 1996). Knowing this helps us understand that some students will need more support in learning prosocial behaviors. To summarize, low conflict relationships at home could lead to the possibility of having positive peer relationships at school.

Positive peer relationships and positive interactions during lunch and recess lead to high academic achievement and low student-teacher conflict (Hernandez et al., 2016). For instance, a curriculum on kindness would teach children how to show kindness towards others during lunch and recess which would result in building positive relationships. In this study, Hernandez et al. (2016) was able to obtain results from 301 kindergarten children. According to Hernandez et al.



(2016), “in contrast, positive emotions expressed in lunch and recess might have predicted lower conflict because high levels of positive expressivity in a less-structured context are not considered disruptive by adults and might even reflect better social competence” (p. 563). This means that if children are having positive interactions during recess and lunch, it will help children have a better relationship with their teachers and reduce classroom conflict. The relationship between children and teachers is just as important as children with their peers; they go hand in hand. To summarize, if a curriculum on prosocial behaviors were to be implemented in elementary schools, this would lead towards building positive peer and teacher relationships.

Given that acts of kindness, self/emotional regulation skills, and positive peer relationships fall into the category of prosocial behaviors, curricula could be put into place to create more awareness. In order to achieve this, I have created a two-day interactive lesson about prosocial behaviors and acts of kindness for children in the afterschool program at Santa Ynez Valley Charter School, Santa Ynez, California.

### **Theory**

The Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, states that most human behavior is learned through observation, modeling, and imitating (Kurt, 2019). According to Bandura, there are three types of observation that can take place: live, verbal, and symbolic. An example of live observation would be having children observe me show kindness by giving someone a hug. The expectation would be for them to follow with another act of kindness. An example of verbal observation would be giving children verbal instructions on how they can kindly approach a peer on the playground. This takes a lot of patience and focus from the children in order to complete the task. Lastly, an example of symbolic observation would be children watching a movie or reading a book and then relate to what the characters were feeling

(Kurt, 2019). This means that if I read a book about prosocial behaviors, like kindness, the students would be able to relate to the book and hopefully carry out kind interactions with peers. Moreover, there are four other necessary steps in addition to observation in order to achieve learning; attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation processes. Attention needs to be present with observation in order for the individual to retain important information (Kurt, 2019). Retaining information is how individuals remember how to do things (Kurt, 2019). As children observe, they will retain the material by either writing it down or repetition when they carry out kind interactions with peers on the playground. Reproduction happens when both attention and retention have been achieved successfully, and individuals are able to present the behavior (Kurt, 2019). At this point, a child would successfully identify acts of kindness at the end of my presentation. In other words, they would have efficiently achieved learning through reproduction. Lastly, motivation helps observational learning be much more effective (Kurt, 2019). Positive reinforcement like words of encouragement would help children execute the observations they have made. Due to the fact that I have worked so closely with the afterschool program, most students already have the desire of helping the teacher (me) out as best they can. For instance, if I ask the class to gather the outdoor equipment, most students will help gather the equipment. They look forward to giving me a helping hand and hearing me thank them for assisting me. Furthermore, Bandura's Social Learning Theory applies to my project as I will be teaching children through observational learning.

### **Consideration of Diversity**

My project will be conducted at Santa Ynez Valley Charter School in the afterschool program. The following ethnic backgrounds should represent that of the participants at Santa Ynez Valley Charter School. As reported by the School Accountability Report Card (SARC;

2019), Santa Ynez Valley Charter School is .6% Black or African American, 2.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 1.1% Asian, 19.5% Hispanic or Latino, 67.2% White, and 7.5% two or more races. The lessons I will be conducting will be presented in English which would mean participants will have to be English proficient to understand and participate. It should be noted that this project was built to be applied towards young children and it most likely can't be applied to any other grade level above the third grade. This project could be geared towards older students by changing the reading I chose and having a more interactive activity by having them work in groups.

### **Learning Outcomes**

I plan to provide two, 45-minute lessons to the students in the afterschool program at Santa Ynez Valley Charter School.

At the end of this project, students should be able to:

1. identify two acts of kindness.
2. describe a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown.
3. increase acts of kindness on the playground.

### **Method**

#### **Day 1**

First, I told the class what I was going to talk with them about. Due to the fact that I work with these children everyday, I did not have to introduce myself. Then, I asked the class what kindness meant to them. As I was calling on each student, I wrote all their thoughts on a big poster board which was titled, "Kindness," and I hung it up, so that the whole class could see. I asked them, "What does kindness mean to you?" If they couldn't answer that question, I asked, "What does kindness look like?" We brainstormed some ideas together for about 15 minutes.

After that, I read the book, *Kindness is my Superpower* by Alicia Ortego. See Appendix A. When I finished reading the story, I asked them about their thoughts on the book I had chosen. See Appendix B. Then, I asked them if there was anything else they wanted to add to our “Kindness” poster. I figured that after reading the book some new ideas about what kindness is would come up. After no new ideas were brought up, they played about 15 minutes of kindness bingo. Kindness bingo is different from regular bingo as instead of using numbers, I picked out words related to kindness like “nice” or “share”. It is meant to be fun! See Appendix C. To wrap up, I passed out affirmation stickers that gave each and every student a kindness compliment to take home with them.

## **Day 2**

Today, I put up the poster board of “Kindness” and just reminded the students what we had spoken about the previous day. Then, I began to explain how as a class they could pledge to be inclusive and kind to one another. Afterwards, I gave them a piece of construction paper, so that we could create a “Kindness Link.” On their link, they were to either answer, “How will you be kind?” or “How has someone shown kindness towards you?” I was fortunate enough to have two fifth grade students who helped me execute this activity with the afterschool program. They assisted me by helping the children write in their links. See Appendix D. Right before concluding the activity, we were able to staple all the links together and make a colorful chain full of kind moments. At the end, as an act of kindness, I gave each student a fruit popsicle (as it was a very hot day) to commemorate us as a kind classroom.

## **Results**

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would be able to identify two acts of kindness. I believe this learning outcome was met. The kindness poster used in class was full of different

interpretations of kindness. This data was collected when I asked each participant to give me two meanings on what kindness meant to them. Each participant was able to identify two acts of kindness making a total of 16 different acts of kindness. For some students, it was easy to come up with two acts of kindness as their responses were given when asked. See Table 1. For others, I had to come back to them so they could take some time to think. I was very impressed with all the great and quick responses I received. See Figure 1 for what the participants came up with.

Learning outcome 2 was that participants would describe a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown. I believe this learning outcome was met. See Table 2. This data was collected when each participant received a construction paper link and were asked to write about a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown. When it came to writing on their link, there was hardly any hesitation. Most participants were ready to write about how they can show kindness. On this day, there were 9 participants present, so there were a total of 9 kindness links. Interestingly enough, one of the participants was able to fit 2 scenarios on her kindness link, exceeding expectations. See Figure 2 for the final results on the kindness link.

Learning outcome 3 was that participants would increase acts of kindness on the playground. I believe this outcome is being partially met. See Table 3. This data was collected when participants would complete an act of kindness we had reviewed on kindness bingo. I determined that the acts of kindness had increased on the playground when I would say, for example, “Remember, be kind to your teacher”. If the participant showed kindness towards their teacher at that given moment, I would make sure to write it down. I used our kindness bingo words to relate it to how kindness can be shown on the playground. For example, I used the phrase “no teasing” in the following sentence, “No teasing your classmates when they fall”. Another example was using the phrase “compliment” in the following sentence, “Make sure to

compliment your friends on their new clothes”. I let the participants know that I would keep track every time I saw them execute an act of kindness on the playground based on the words we learned through kindness bingo. I believe that if I motivate my participants to use words or acts of kindness, they will then be able to successfully reproduce what they have learned on their own without praise.

### **Discussion**

I believe this project was successful. Learning outcome 1 and 2 were met. Learning outcome 3 has been partially met, and I can continue to measure it. The participants were interested in the topic of kindness. The activities I presented them with were age appropriate and kept them engaged. I believe they enjoyed the kindness bingo activity the most. I’m glad they enjoyed it because that was supposed to be the fun part of this curriculum, the rest of the activities were more for learning purposes. As far as Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, I believe that the students did learn through observation, modeling, and imitating. I did not focus on live observation, but focused more on verbal and symbolic observation. I presented participants with verbal instructions on how they can approach a peer kindly. Just the other day, a participant showed kindness on the playground by letting another participant use the swing first. This goes to show that the additional processes to achieve learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation processes were achieved. As I said above, participants were able to successfully reproduce what they learned. Undoubtedly, this means participants were paying attention and were able to retain information to carry out what they learned.

On the topic of diversity, I believe that my project included everyone in the afterschool program. In the future, in order to be more inclusive, I could present my project to a classroom with more participants so that there is more diversity. If I had to do this again, as mentioned

above, I would honestly just hope to execute my project to a classroom with more participants. It was so rewarding to see my project come together. Without a doubt, I believe the participants successfully learned about the topic of kindness and most importantly, had fun while learning.

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*Table 1**List of responses on what kindness means to participants*

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Help someone	Playing with someone
Give bandaid	Sharing
Comfort someone who is crying	Being nice
Let someone be in line first	Receiving help
Complimenting someone	Letting someone have a turn first
Pick someone up	Being nice to mom
Giving someone candy	Respect others
Help with homework	Treat people how you want to be treated

---

*Table 2**List of participant responses on describing a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown*

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“I am going to share my toy bunny”

“I want somebody to go in line first, thanks”

“I am going to be at the back of the line”

“Help people up when they fall down”

“Being kind to your family and love my mom”

“I will help someone up when they fall down”

“Help someone with their homework”

“Invite someone to play”

“Treat people how you want to be treated” and “Being nice to someone”

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*Table 3**List of the participants increasing acts of kindness on the playground*

<b>Act of Kindness</b>	<b>Number of times executed</b>
Teacher	1
Friends	3
Hug	2
Respect	0
Compliment	1
Share	4
Smile	10
Love	0
Nice	3
No teasing	0
Helping	7
Kind	2

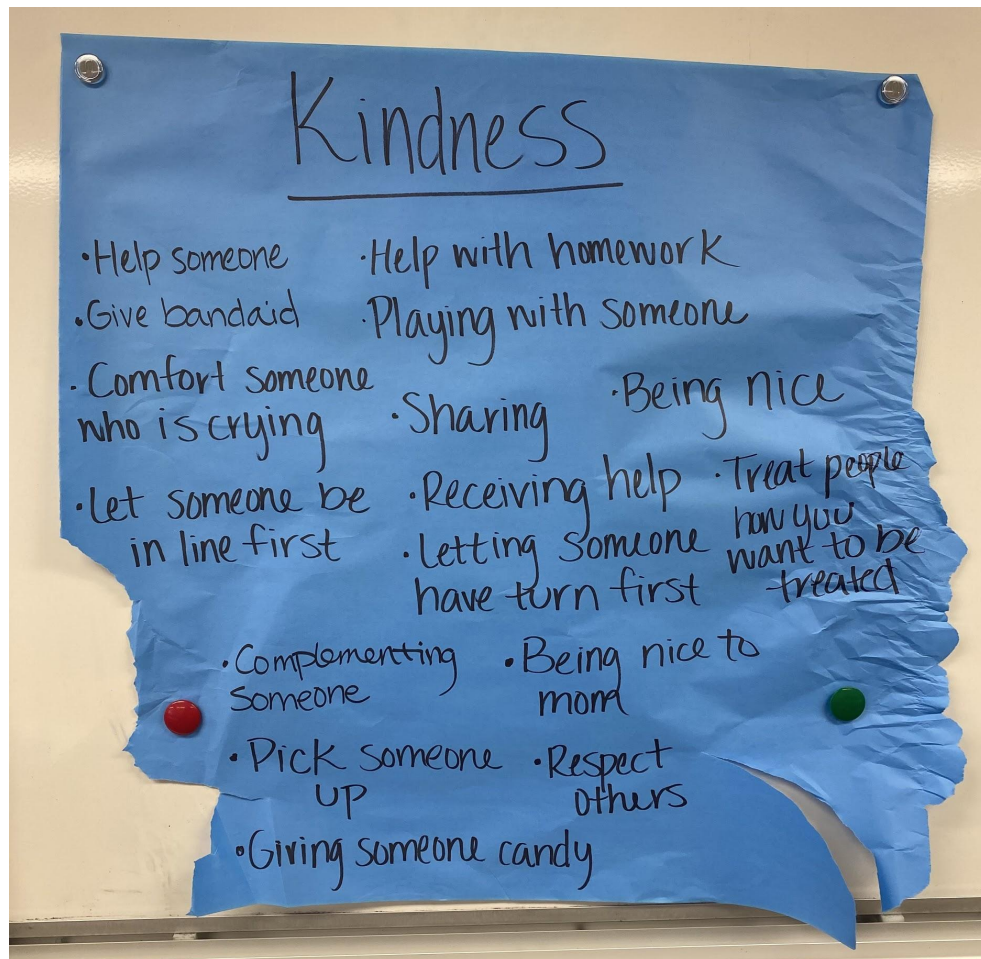
*Figure 1**Results of responses on what kindness means to participants*

Figure 2

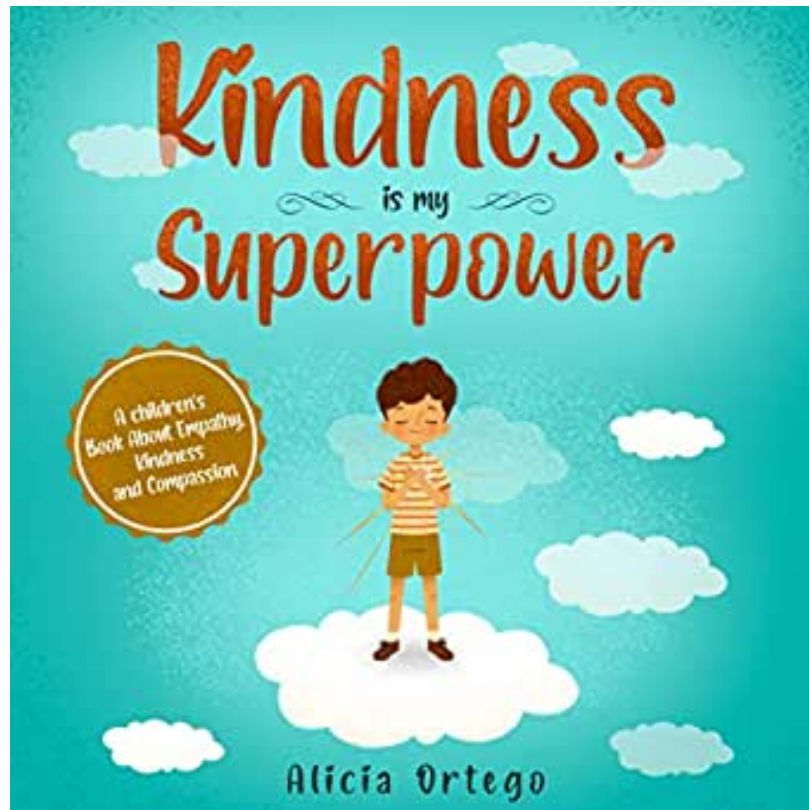
Results of participant describing a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown on their kindness link





*Appendix A*

*The book read in class, Kindness is My Superpower by Alicia Ortego*

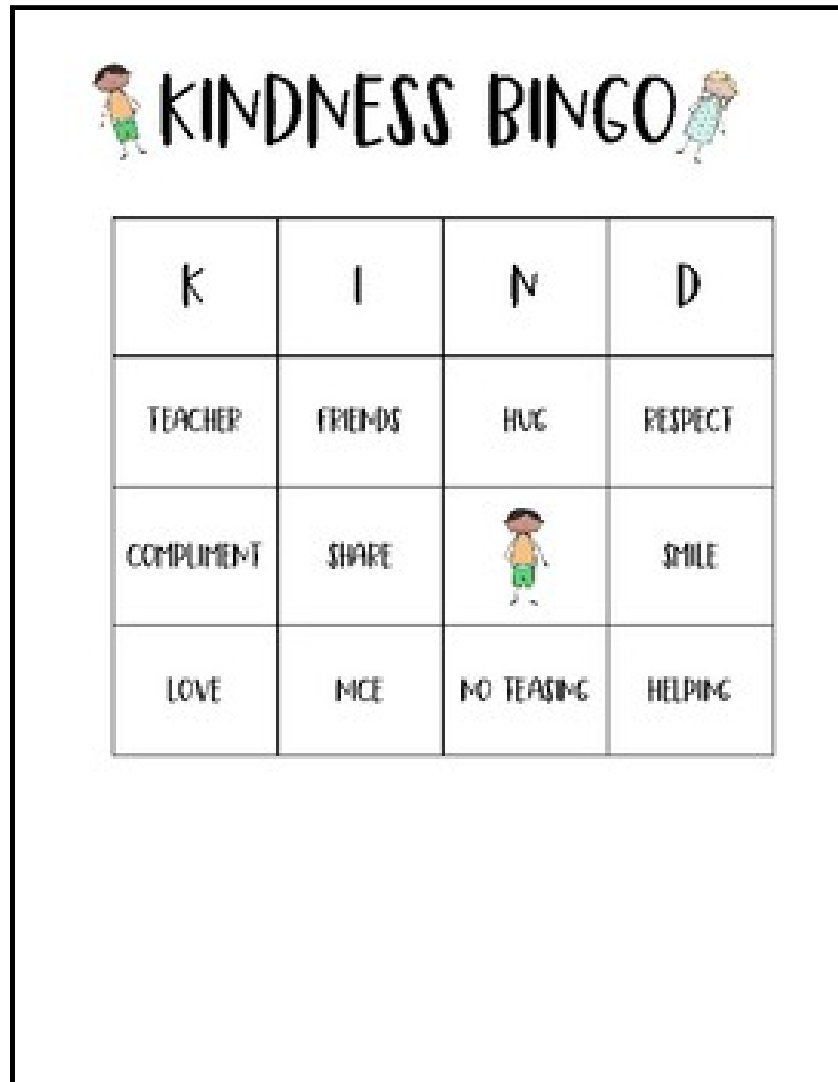


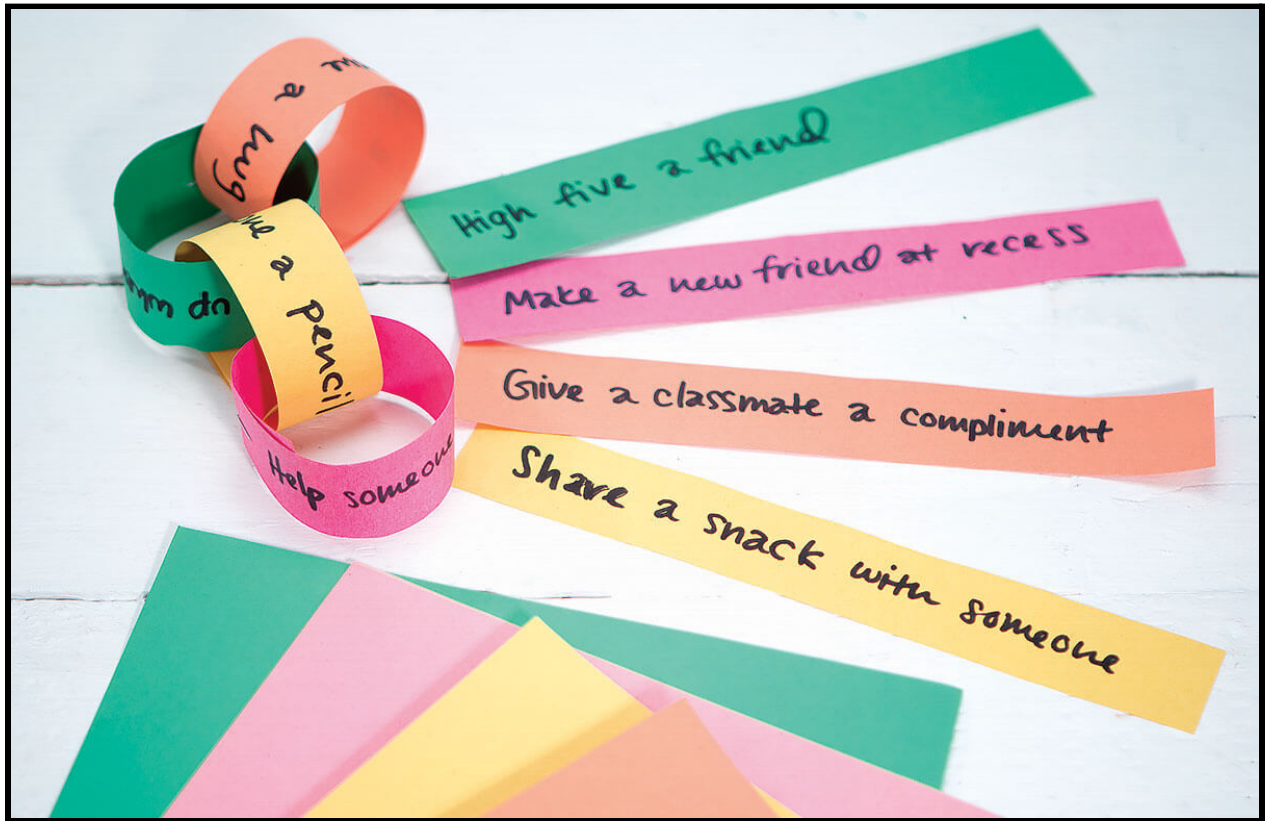
*Appendix B**Questions to participants about the reading*

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1. What did Lucas do to his friend Lisa at school?
2. Why did he do that? Was that the right choice?
3. Lucas' mom described kindness in many ways, can anyone remember an example?
4. What were some of the things Lucas did to be kind?
5. Can you only be kind at one place? Where can you be kind?
6. What was Lucas' superpower?



*Appendix C**Kindness Bingo*

*Appendix D**Kindness Link*

*Appendix E*

*Capstone Festival Presentation*

# Educating Elementary Children on Prosocial Behaviors

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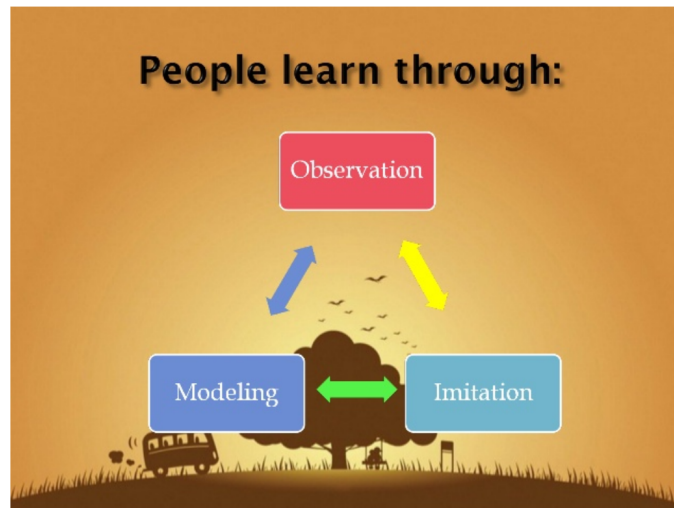
## Need

- Prosocial behavior curriculums on kindness and positive relationships
- Children gain beneficial skills used in everyday life

**Let's strengthen  
our kindness muscles.**



# Social Learning Theory



Who? What?  
Where? When?  
How?

- After school program
- Grades K-3rd
- Santa Ynez Valley Charter School
- 2 day lesson plan
- In person



## Learning Outcomes

At the end of this project, students should be able to:

1. Identify two acts of kindness
2. Describe a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown
3. Demonstrate acts of kindness on the playground


## Segment 1

- Define kindness
- Read, *Kindness is My Superpower* by Alicia Ortego
- Play Kindness Bingo





## KINDNESS BINGO

K	I	N	D
TEACHER	FRIENDS	HUG	RESPECT
COMPLIMENT	SHARE		SMILE
LOVE	NICE	NO TEASING	HELPING

## Segment 2

- Recap kindness definition
- Create a "Kindness Link"
- Conclude with an act of kindness



## Segment 3

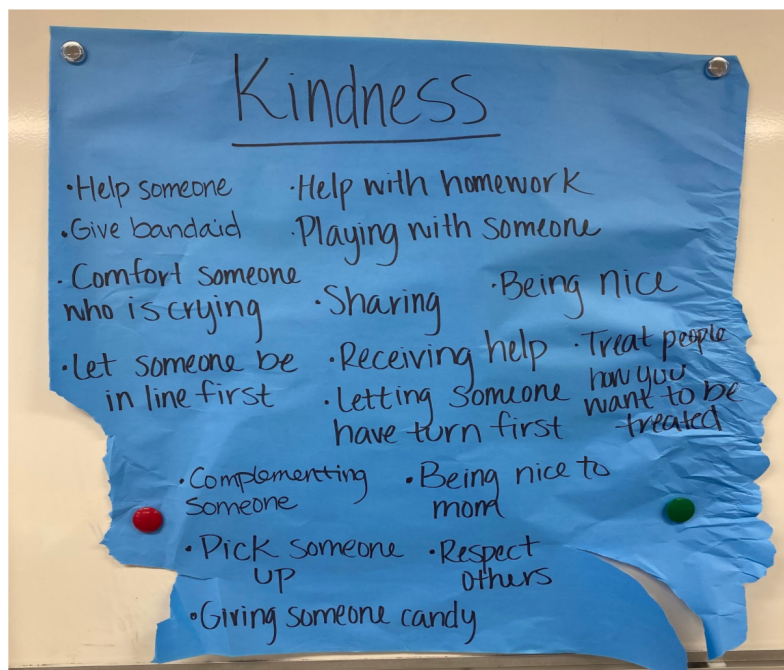
- Use kind words on the playground
- Execute acts of kindness
- Reinforce kindness bingo terms on playground



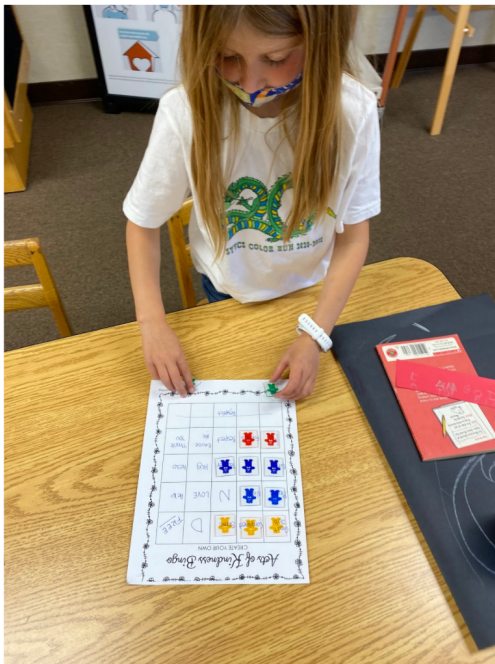
## Results

- Learning outcome 1 was that participants would be able to identify two acts of kindness
- I believe this learning outcome was met
- Each participant was able to identify two acts of kindness

HOORAY!







## Results

- Learning outcome 2 was that participants would describe a scenario (time) where kindness can be shown
- I believe this learning outcome was met
- Most participants were ready to write about how they can show kindness

HOORAY!



## Results

- Learning outcome 3 was that participants would increase acts of kindness on the playground
- I believe this outcome is being partially met
- Asked them to execute acts of kindness on playground



Act of Kindness	Number of times executed
Teacher	1
Friends	3
Hug	2
Respect	0
Compliment	1
Share	4
Smile	10
Love	0
Nice	3
No teasing	0
Helping	7
Kind	2

## Discussion

- I believe this project was successful with the after school program
- The participants were interested in the topic of kindness
- The activities I presented them with were age appropriate and kept them engaged
- If I had to do this again, I would hope to execute my project to a classroom with more participants

Thank you! Questions?

S. Stephanie Vega

